

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Berea College
Program Name: PartnerCorps STEM

Application ID: 14AC 155728

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant has identified severe and compelling community needs: high poverty, secondary students not at grade level or college ready in math, and postsecondary students not college ready in math. The applicant demonstrates through the presentation of an array of data that these needs are significant as compared to the state averages.

The applicant provides significant evidence of academic need by supporting with PLAN and American College Testing (ACT) data that only between 9.8%-27% of low-income students in the target area meet college ready benchmarks in math as reported by these national examinations.

The applicant further documents the prevalence of the need by providing relevant data indicating that 60% of students in the target community must take non-credit remedial college math courses, which prevents the students from graduating on time, adds to their debt burden, and prevents them from participating in a Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) career pathway.

The applicant clearly describes the demographics and economic status of the residents of the service area and the target population.

The applicant organization provides narrative which clearly demonstrates a need for their proposal and the positive effect program implementation will have on the service community and its residents.

The applicant provides evidence of a deficiency in academic and literacy skills of the target population as compared to local, state and national averages (20.3% below Federal Poverty Level compared to 14.3% nationally, 22.8% of children living in poverty compared to 20 % nationally, unemployment at 8.4% compared to 7.3% nationally).

The applicant documents 25% of students in the local county as being college ready for math and only 5.1% in the target population community.

The applicant provided detailed quantitative data regarding the need for tutoring and mentoring in the academic areas of math and science in the specified area.

The applicant provides quality, localized statistics to support the students' need for more intensive services/programs with math improvement.

The applicant documents that 60% of students in the target population attend college.

Through its proposed program of providing tutorial support to at-risk students in rural communities, AmeriCorps members are a highly effective means of solving the community problem by filling a much needed academic gap.

Approximately 1,800 students will be exposed to academic interventions designed to increase math achievement.

The applicant provides narrative and documentation which thoroughly describes the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program (APTIP) Model to be utilized, including similar application and usage in a variety of settings and clearly describes and aligns the goals listed in the narrative as being appropriate for its usage to achieve desired goals.

The applicant lists several quasi-experimental studies and one non-experimental study as evidence and support for their program model selection.

The applicant describes a consistent and well-aligned Theory of Change that demonstrates a logical relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

The applicant has strong community partnerships.

Utilizing AmeriCorps members to provide in class assistance for mathematical improvement aligns to the proposed intervention.

The applicant cites its successful management of a number of pre-college intervention programs, i.e. AmeriCorps Schools Turnaround, GEAR UP, Investing in Innovation, and two TRIO programs as its prior experience in solving the identified problem. The applicant documents that these programs have led to positive academic outcomes for low-income youth.

The applicant documents having successfully managed a variety of federal funded programs including AmeriCorps

The applicant identifies that Partners for Education at Berea College has a National Direct AmeriCorps School Turnaround program.

Weaknesses:

The applicant failed to adequately link the impoverished and unemployed, or the students who come from these

homes, to the low math test score data.

The statistics provided by the applicant for low-income/poverty and unemployment as a link to decreased success in mathematics in high school are not sufficient enough to define the problem/need.

The applicant did not provide evidence to support how these statistics inform the need for tutoring in math at the high school level.

The application lacked clarity regarding the study participants; in one section of the narrative it was mentioned that all of the students from the targeted grades in the proposed high schools would be the study participants. In another place in the application it stated that STEM mentors will be sought for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch and who express an interest in STEM careers. And in another section it stated that “Members will develop relationships with the parents of their Algebra I and II students with particular focus on connecting with the families of students identified as low-income.”

The applicant did not provide clarity regarding the participants of the before school and after school programs. It was unclear if the students who are receiving the in-school tutorial services are the same students who will participate in the before and after school programs.

It is unclear where the AmeriCorps members will assist in promoting the parental involvement of the proposed intervention as defined in the logic model.

The data provided (APTIP) did not include quantitative information.

The (APTIP) study did not regard the proposed program of the applicant.

The applicant is only five months into the first year of programming and has not provided significant impact of intervention.